

Gender Equality and the Role of Women in Economic Development

Dr. Rita Madanlal Shetiya
Assistant Professor of Economics
Mail Id: drritashetiya@gmail.com

Abstract:

Women play a crucial role in economic development by contributing to various sectors, like Agriculture, Industry and Service also fostering entrepreneurship, and driving innovation, ultimately boosting economic growth and promoting gender equality. Women's economic participation only promotes agricultural productivity, enterprise development at the micro, small and medium enterprise levels, as well as enhances business management and returns on investment. Empowering women is an important topic not only in developing nations but also developed nations. Even though women are an integral part of any society, yet their involvement in decision making by the use of their active contribution in economic activities is shallow. Gender inequality is the main barrier of women participation in Economic Development. Refers to the unequal distribution of rights, resources, and opportunities between genders, often resulting in discrimination and disadvantage for women, non-binary, and Trans people. Women empowerment and Economic development are interlinked, where on the one hand; development alone can play a significant role in driving down inequality between women and men while on the other hand empowering women can benefit development. This paper explores the role of women in the workforce for the economic development of the country in different States and also focus on what problems/challenges women's are facing.

Key Words: Gender Inequality, Economic Development, Women Empowerment, Gender equality

Introduction: Gender inequality refers to the unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities between genders, often leading to discrimination and limited opportunities for

women and non-binary individuals. Gender inequality leads to less women participation in economic development. The economic role of women in India has traditionally been limited, with many women facing cultural, social and economic barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the workforce. However, in recent years, the importance of women's role in the Indian economy has begun to grow. However, they still face many problems/challenges and obstacles. This is a review of this.

India has to emerge as a developed nation by 2047. If we want inclusive and sustainable development to be achieved now, and then women's contribution is crucial. Investing in women's economic empowerment paves the way for gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women contribute immensely to the economy by running businesses, working in the fields, as entrepreneurs, as employees or by providing unpaid care at home. A wise man of great intelligence and strength once said, "The best measure of a nation's progress is how it treats its women." For centuries, women have faced challenges and obstacles and this has given them immense patience, perseverance and helped them become stronger. What is needed for this is to provide opportunities, support and opportunities to empower women. Various government schemes changing the perspective towards women's and allowing them to live their lives as human being. This requires public awareness and hands that support them.

Significance of the Study: there are several studies on the role of women in economic development. But researcher wants to study on gender inequality and role of women in economic development. Also find out is there any effect because of gender inequality on economic development. Majority of the study focus on only role of women's in economic development. Women's role in economic development and gender equality is crucial for sustainable development and inclusive growth. When women are empowered and have equal opportunities in education, employment, and leadership, economies benefit from a wider pool of talent, increased productivity, and higher overall economic output. Achieving gender equality also promotes peace, stability, and improved family well-being, leading to a more prosperous and equitable society. Today's world we only talk about gender Equality but in practically still everywhere we saw gender inequality. Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to the economy by way of doing businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs, as employees or by doing unpaid care work at home.

Review of Literature:

1. **S. Sri GaganJ. Jerom Steward and A. Subhashini (2024), The Role of Women in Economic Development:** In this research paper researcher point out that the role of women in economic development is increasingly recognized as indispensable for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Over the years, significant progress has been made in understanding and promoting women's economic empowerment, but challenges persist, and much valuing women's contributions, investing in their education and skills, promoting their

access to finance and markets, and creating supportive policy environments, societies can unlock the full potential of half of their population and build more resilient, prosperous, and equitable economies for all.

2. **G.Angala Eswari, (2019), A Study on Role of Women in Economic Development in India**

This research paper highlighted Empowerment of women socially, economically, politically and legally is going to be a phenomenal task. It is not working to be easy to change the culture for disrespect for women. The only revolution can bring changes in a day, but reforms take their time. Women have a unique position in the economy. If women gain economic strength, they gain visibility and voice. Women's direct participation in decisionmaking capacity also income generation activities can make significant contributions towards women empowerment. Entrepreneurship and working as income earned person of the family can help women to gain economically active, which may help them in the improvement of their social status.

3. **Ally Walke and Kishore G. Kulkarni,(2024), Role of women in Economic Development: A Compartision of the Development trajectories in Ethiopia and Uganda**

The evidence presented in this paper suggests several conclusions which can be summarized as follows: in the Ethiopian and Ugandan economies, women do not participate in high growth sectors and a majority of women, if employed, work in the agriculture sector and have substantially unequal access and control over productive resources. In education, Ethiopian and Ugandan girls

are expected to attend less school than boys, yet these numbers have increased significantly in Ethiopia, and slightly less so in Uganda. This evidence suggests that if Ethiopia and Uganda significantly increase economic and educational opportunities for women, while maintaining gains in healthcare, fertility rates will decrease and more sustained economic growth can occur, which will ultimately have positive gains for women's empowerment.

Objective:

1. To study reason/causes behind inequality.
2. To examine the role of Women in Economic Development in India.
3. Suitable suggestions for Gender Equality.

Research Methodology:

The study used secondary data. The study follows a descriptive research approach. The secondary data has been collected from using secondary sources which includes Websites, Research papers etc.

Gender Equality:

Now days we more talk about equality, what is gender equality? Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth.

Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities

between men and women. A forward-thinking woman can take not only the family but also society forward. For that, you need to be proud of being a woman. But one should be able to preserve the femininity given by the Lord. Both men and women are important wheels for society to move forward. A woman alone or a man alone is incapable of developing society. So first you have to decide from whom you want to be free. Do you want freedom from men? I think not. We want freedom from the yoke of tradition, from oppressive customs, from the hanging sword of daily oppression. The mentality of treating women as secondary, be it women or men, must change. She should be allowed to live her life in her own way. Even today, many earning women cannot use their salaries as they want. A woman is basically thrifty and advocates fair exchange. So she doesn't spend a lot of money. But still, she is not entitled to her salary. Changes are taking place on a large scale. The woman is walking shoulder to shoulder with the man. But even today, in many middle-class families, girls do not have the right to study and work as per their wishes. Equality between men and women, as I understand it, means that men and women understand each other and develop. Just because the lawgiver made a woman bearable does not mean that she should bear and men should do injustice. Nor is it that women should act arbitrarily in the name of women's liberation. Equality is to understand and improve.

Gender inequality has been a crucial social issue in India for centuries. Census 2011 shows the child sex ratio among children of 0-6 years to be

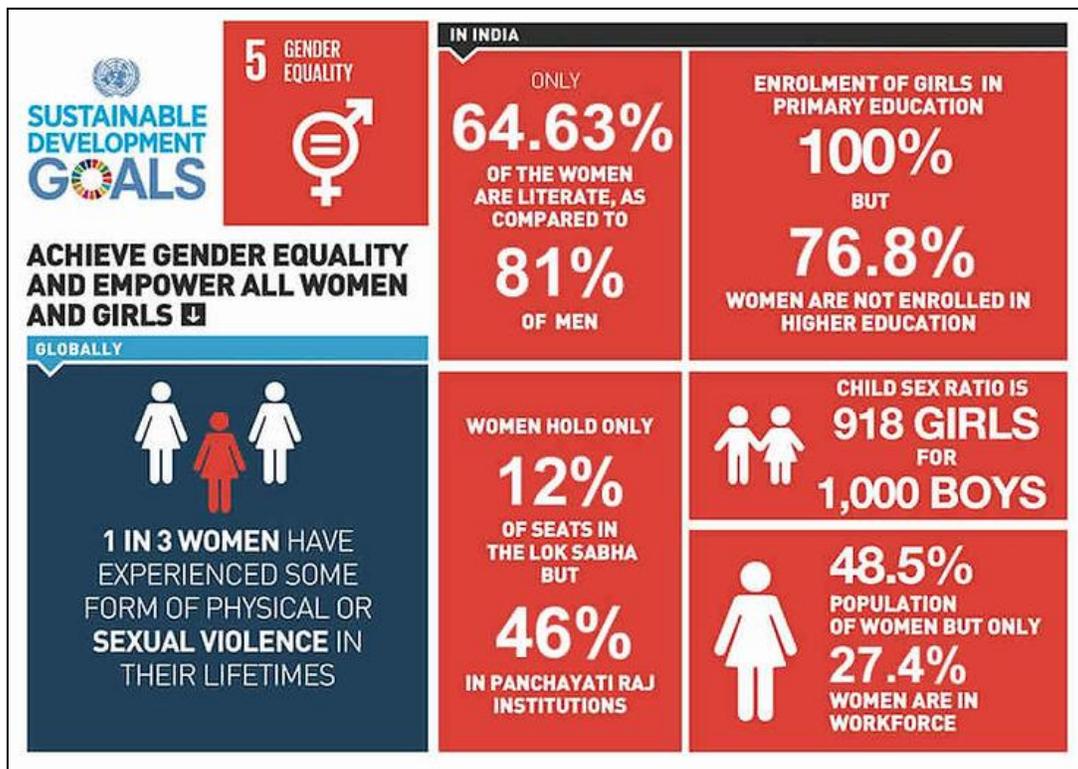
918 girls for every 1000 boys in India. This statistic speaks for itself and demands urgent and efficient solutions to address the cause of gender inequalities.

The discrimination starts even before the girl child is born. In many instances, she is prevented from being born. The girl child is considered a burden. She is often deprived of the basic rights and equal opportunities to lead a wholesome childhood and adult life. According to the 2011 Census, of the total child population in India, girls account for 48%, many of whom are engaged in child labor, child trafficking and child marriage.

The future of innumerable girls looks grim, as shown by the following statistics: 12.15 million Children are married in India - 8.9 million are

girls; married girls are three times the number of boys. (Census 2011) 51% of all trafficking victims were children, of which more than 80% were girls. (NCRB 2018) There are 223 million child brides in India; 102 million were married before turning 15. (UNICEF)

Gender inequality, the unequal distribution of rights, resources, and opportunities based on gender, is fueled by a complex interplay of factors, including societal norms, economic disparities, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Patriarchal structures, which often favor men and de value women, contribute significantly to this inequality. Additionally, gender-based violence, discrimination in the workplace, and limited political representation further exacerbate the problem.



Source: [India's stance on SDG 5: Gender Equality \(unadap.org\)](https://unadap.org/)

Here's a more detailed look at the causes:

- ❖ Societal Norms and Stereotypes:
 1. Patriarchal structures:

These systems often grant men dominance and authority, leading to the marginalization of

women and the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes.

Gender roles:

Traditional expectations about what is considered appropriate behavior for men and women limit individual expression and opportunities.

2. Son preference:

In many cultures, there is a strong preference for sons, leading to discrimination against girls and a neglect of their needs.

❖ Economic Factors:

1. Wage gaps:

Women often earn less than men for the same work, impacting their financial independence and economic security.

2. Lack of access to resources:

Women may face barriers to land ownership, credit, and other resources needed for economic empowerment.

3. Limited employment opportunities:

Gender discrimination in hiring, promotion, and workplace culture can limit women's career advancement.

❖ Education and Healthcare:

1. Unequal access to education:

Girls and women in many parts of the world may have limited access to quality education, hindering their development and opportunities.

2. Health disparities:

Women may face barriers to accessing healthcare, including reproductive health services, leading to health complications.

3. Malnutrition:

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by malnutrition, which can negatively impact their health and well-being.

❖ Political and Legal Factors:

1. Underrepresentation in politics:

Women are often underrepresented in political decision-making, limiting their ability to influence policies that affect their lives.

2. Lack of legal protections:

In many countries, laws do not adequately protect women's rights and may even perpetuate gender-based discrimination.

3. Gender-based violence:

Violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and honor killings, is a significant cause of gender inequality.

❖ Other Contributing Factors:

1. Caste system:

In India, the caste system can intersect with gender to create further inequalities for women, particularly those from lower castes.

2. Racism:

Racial discrimination can further exacerbate gender inequality, impacting women of color in unique ways.

3. Poverty:

Poverty is often gendered, with women disproportionately affected by its consequences.

4. Child marriage:

This practice deprives girls of their rights to education, healthcare, and a healthy childhood.

The Role of women in Economics development

Women play a crucial role in economic development by contributing to both the formal and informal economies, driving innovation, and fostering a more equitable and sustainable society. Empowering women through access to education, resources, and equal opportunities

leads to increased productivity, innovation, and overall economic growth.

❖ **Elaboration:**

1. Economic Contributions:

Women contribute significantly to the economy through their paid labor, entrepreneurship, and unpaid care work.

2. Formal Labor Market:

Women's participation in the formal labor market, especially in sectors like manufacturing and services, contributes to GDP growth and national income.

3. Entrepreneurship:

Women entrepreneurs drive innovation and dynamism in the market, creating jobs and contributing to economic diversification.

4. Unpaid Care Work:

While often overlooked, women's unpaid care work (such as childcare and household tasks) is a vital component of the economy and contributes to the well-being of families and communities.

❖ **Access to Education and Resources:**

Empowering women through education, access to financial resources, and equal opportunities is crucial for their economic participation and overall development.

❖ **Gender Equality and Economic Growth:**

Studies have shown that gender equality is linked to economic growth and that investing in women's economic empowerment can boost national productivity and create more inclusive economies.

❖ **Innovation and Productivity:**

When women have equal access to resources and opportunities, they are more likely to innovate and develop new businesses, contributing to economic growth and diversification.

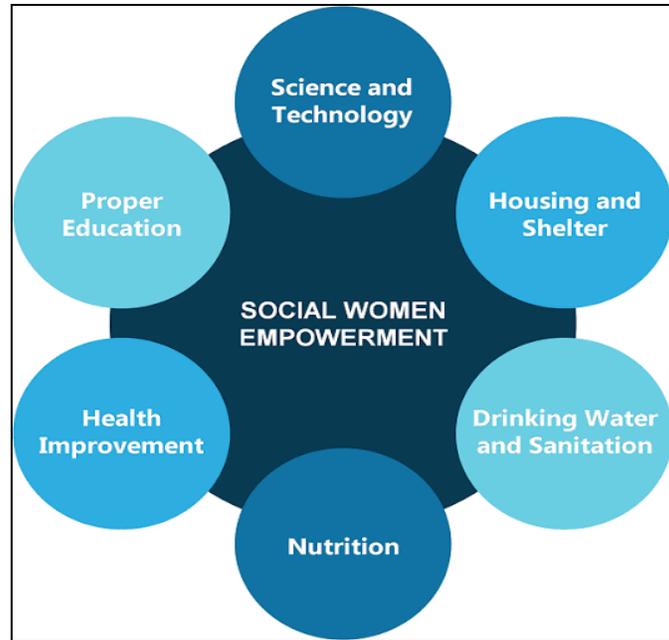
❖ **Social and Economic Development:**

Empowering women not only benefits the economy but also promotes social progress, reduces poverty, and leads to a more equitable and sustainable society.

Suggestions for Gender Equality

A number of strategies can be implemented to empower women economically, including:

- **Promote gender equality laws and policies:** Governments can implement laws and policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, education, and access to finance.
- **Invest in girls' education:** Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to empower women economically. Girls who are educated are more likely to be employed, earn higher incomes, and have healthier children.
- **Provide access to childcare and eldercare:** Providing access to affordable childcare and eldercare can make it easier for women to participate in paid employment.
- **Increase women's access to finance:** Providing women with access to loans, savings accounts, and other financial services can help them start or grow businesses.
- **Change social norms and attitudes:** Social norms and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality need to be changed to create a more enabling environment for women's economic empowerment.



Source: Women as Catalysts for Economic Transformation: Championing Gender Equality for a Sustainable Future | by Pratik Salvi | Medium

Conclusion:

The economic empowerment of women is essential for achieving sustainable economic growth and development. When women are empowered, they can contribute their full potential to the economy, leading to improved health, education, and overall well-being. Governments, businesses, and civil society organizations all have a role to play in empowering women economically. By working together, we can create a world where all women have the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to a more prosperous and equitable future.

Reference

1. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381167904> **The Role of Women in Economic Development**
2. Facts and figures: Economic empowerment | UN Women – Headquarters
3. ParticipationEconomy22.pdf (mospi.gov.in)
4. Promoting Women's Economic Participation (state.gov)
5. A Study on Role of Women in Economic Development in India | Shanlax International Journal of Economics (shanlaxjournals.in)
6. ROLE OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARISON OF THE DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES IN ETHIOPIA AND UGANDA by Kishore Kulkarni :: SSRN
7. Just a moment... (gvi.co.uk)
8. Gender Inequality in India - Causes & Solutions (cry.org)

9. [India's stance on SDG 5: Gender Equality](#)
(unadap.org)
10. [ParticipationEconomy22.pdf](#)
(mospi.gov.in)
11. [**https://thegraceladies.com/2023/03/08/women-power-source-of-inspiration/**](https://thegraceladies.com/2023/03/08/women-power-source-of-inspiration/)
12. [India's stance on SDG 5: Gender Equality](#)
(unadap.org)
13. [Women as Catalysts for Economic Transformation: Championing Gender Equality for a Sustainable Future | by Pratik Salvi | Medium](#)